NUMB. LXVIII.

The SPECTATOR.

Nos duo turba ſumus ——. Ovid.

Friday, May 18. 1711.

ONE would think that the larger the Company is, in which we are engaged, the greater Variety of Thoughts and Subjects would be ſtarted in Diſcourſe; but inſtead of this, we find that Converſation is never ſo much heightened and confined as in numerous Aſſemblies. When a Multitude meet together upon any Subject of Diſcourſe, their Debates are taken up chiefly in Forms and general Poſitions; nay, if we deſcend into a more contracted Aſſembly of Men and Women, the Talk generally runs upon the Weather, Faſhions, News, and the like publick Topicks. In Proportion, as Converſation gets into Cliques and Knots of Friends, it deſcends into Particulars, and grows more free and communicative: But the moſt open, inſtructive, and unreſerved Diſcourſe, is that which paſſes between two Perſons who are familiar and intimate Friends. On theſe Occaſions, a Man gives a Looſe to every Paſſion and every Thought that is uppermoſt, diſcovers his moſt retired Opinions of Perſons and Things, tries the Beauty and Strength of his Sentiments, and expoſes his whole Soul to the Examination of his Friend.

Tully was the firſt who obſerved, That Friendſhip improves Happineſs and abates Miſery, by the doubling of our Joy and dividing of our Grief; a Thought in which he hath been followed by all the Eſſayers upon Friendſhip that have written ſince his Time. Sir *Francis Bacon* has finely deſcribed other Advantages, or, as he calls them, Fruits of Friendſhip; and indeed there is no Subject of Morality which has been better handled and more exhauſted than this. Among the ſeveral fine things which have been ſpoken of it, I ſhall beg Leave to quote ſome out of a very ancient Author, whoſe Book would be regarded as one of the moſt ſhining Tracts of Morality that is extant, if it appeared under the Name of a *Confucius*, or of any celebrated Grecian Philoſopher: I mean the little Apocryphal Treatiſe entituled, *The Wiſdom of the Son of Sirach*. How finely has he deſcribed the Art of making Friends by an obliging and affable Behaviour? And laid down that Precept which a late excellent Author has delivered as his own, 'That we ſhould have 'many Well-wiſhers, but few Friends. *Sweet Language will multiply Friends; and a fair ſpeaking Tongue will encreaſe kind Greetings. Be in Peace with many, nevertheleſs have but one Counſellour of a Thouſand.* With what Prudence does he caution us in the Choice of our Friends? And with what Strokes of Nature (I could almoſt ſay of Humour) has he deſcribed the Behaviour of a treacherous and ſelf-intereſted Friend? *If thou would'ſt get a Friend prove him firſt, and be not haſty to credit him: For ſome Man is a Friend for his own Occaſion, and will not abide in the Day of thy Trouble. And there is a Friend who being turned to Enmity and Strife, will diſcover thy Reproach.* Again, *Some Friend is a Companion at the Table, and will not continue in the Day of thy Affliction: But in thy Proſperity he will be as thy ſelf, and will be bold over thy Servants. If thou be brought low he will be againſt thee, and hide himſelf from thy Face.* What can be more ſtrong and pointed than the following Verſe? *Separate thy ſelf from thine Enemies, and take Heed of thy Friends.* In the next Words he particularizes one of thoſe Fruits of Friendſhip which is deſcribed at length by the two famous Authors above-mention'd, and falls into a general Elogium of Friendſhip, which is very juſt as well as very ſublime. *A faithful Friend is a ſtrong Defence; and he that hath found ſuch an one, hath found a Treaſure. Nothing doth countervail a faithful Friend, and his Excellency is unvaluable. A faithful Friend is the Medicine of Life; and they that fear the Lord ſhall find him. Whoſo feareth the Lord ſhall direct his Friendſhip aright; for as he is, ſo ſhall his Neighbour (that is his Friend) be alſo.* I do not remember to have met with any Saying that has pleaſed me more than that of a Friend's being the Medicine of Life, to expreſs the Efficacy of Friendſhip in healing the Pains and Anguiſh that naturally cleave to our Exiſtence in this World; and am wonderfully pleaſed with the Turn in the laſt Sentence, That a virtuous Man ſhall as a Bleſſing meet with a Friend who is as virtuous as himſelf. There is another Saying in the ſame Author which would have been very much admired in an Heathen Writer; *Forſake not an old Friend, for the new is not comparable to him: A new Friend is as new Wine; when it is old thou ſhalt drink it with Pleaſure.* With what

Strength

Strength of Alluſion and Force of Thought, has he deſcribed the Breaches and Violations of Friendſhip? *Whoſo caſteth a Stone at the Birds frayeth them away; and he that upbraideth his Friend, breaketh Friendſhip. Though thou draweſt a Sword at a Friend yet deſpair not, for there may be a returning to Favour: If thou haſt opened thy Mouth againſt thy Friend fear not, for there may be a Reconciliation; except for upbraiding, or Pride, or diſcloſing of Secrets, or a treacherous Wound; for, for theſe things every Friend will depart.* We may obſerve in this and ſeveral other Precepts in this Author, thoſe little familiar Inſtances and Illuſtrations which are ſo much admired in the moral Writings of *Horace* and *Epictetus*. There are very beautiful Inſtances of this Nature in the following Paſſages, which are likewiſe written upon the ſame Subject: *Whoſo diſcovereth Secrets loſeth his Credit, and ſhall never find a Friend to his Mind. Love thy Friend, and be faithful unto him; but if thou bewrayeſt his Secrets follow no more after him: For as a Man hath deſtroyed his Enemy, ſo haſt thou loſt the Love of thy Friend; as one that letteth a Bird go out of his Hand, ſo haſt thou let thy Friend go, and ſhalt not get him again: Follow after him no more, for he is too far off; he is as a Roe eſcaped out of the Snare. As for a Wound, it may be bound up, and after reviling there may be Reconciliation; but he that bewrayeth Secrets, is without Hope.*

Among the ſeveral Qualifications of a good Friend, this wiſe Man has very juſtly ſingled out Conſtancy and Faithfulneſs as the principal: To theſe others have added Virtue, Knowledge, Diſcretion, Equality in Age and Fortune, and, as *Cicero* calls it, *Morum Comitas*, a Pleaſantneſs of Temper. If I were to give my Opinion upon ſuch an exhauſted Subject, I ſhould join to theſe other Qualifications a certain Æquability or Evenneſs of Behaviour. A Man often contracts a Friendſhip with one whom perhaps he does not find out till after a Year's Converſation; when on a Sudden ſome latent ill Humour breaks out upon him, which he never diſcovered or ſuſpected at his firſt entering into an Intimacy with him. There are ſeveral Perſons who in ſome certain Periods of their Lives are inexpreſſibly agreeable, and in others as odious and deteſtable. *Martial* has given us a very pretty Picture of one of this Species in the following Epigram;

Difficilis, facilis, jucundus, acerbus es idem,
Nec tecum poſſim vivere, nec ſine te.

In all thy Humours, whether grave or mellow,
Thou'rt ſuch a touchy, teſty, pleaſant Fellow;
Haſt ſo much Wit, and Mirth, and Spleen about thee,
There is no living with thee, nor without thee.

It is very unlucky for a Man to be entangled in a Friendſhip with one, who by theſe Changes and Viciſſitudes of Humour is ſometimes amiable and ſometimes odious: And as moſt Men are at ſome Times in an admirable Frame and Diſpoſition of Mind, it ſhould be one of the greateſt Taſks of Wiſdom to keep our ſelves well when we are ſo, and never to go out of that which is the agreeable Part of our Character.

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At the Deſire of ſeveral Perſons of Quality.
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AT the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane, this preſent Friday, being the 18th of May, will be preſented the Tragedy of Oedipus, King of Thebes. The Part of Oedipus to be perform'd by Mr. Powell, Adrastus King of Argos by Mr. Booth, Creon by Mr. Keene, Hæmon by Mr. Mills, Tereſias by Mr. Boman, Phorbas by Mr. Husband, Ægeon by Mr. Cory, Ghost by Mr. Elrington, the four Citizens by Mr. Leigh, Mr. Norris, Mr. Bullock, Mr. Pack; Jocasta by Mrs. Knight, Euridice by Mrs. Bradſhaw. Note, The Tickets that were given out for the Rover will be taken at this Play.

This Play is ſold by Jacob Tonſon, at Shakeſpear's Head over-againſt Catharine-ſtreet in the Strand.

Loſt betwixt Hampſted and London, or left at the lower Flask in Hampſtead, an Ivory Snuff-Box with a ſilver Ring and Hinge, a naked Venus leaning on a Fountain, with a blue Vail, and a naked Cupid holding a Roſe in his Hand over the Middle of the Vail painted on the inner Side of the Lid. Whoever brings it to Young Man's Coffee-houſe Charing-Croſs, ſhall have Half a Guinea Reward, and no Queſtions aſk'd: And if offer'd to be pawn'd or ſold you are deſired to ſtop it, and on Notice given ſhall receive the Reward aforeſaid.

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To be Sold, at a lower Rate than ordinary, at the Queen's Head joining to the Church Gate in Bedford-ſtreet, Covent-Garden, all Sorts of Druggets, Hair and Worſted Camlets, Sagathies, Duroys, Shagreens, Shalloons, Durants, Padua Serges, Shags, Serge de Nims, Calmancoes, and all other Goods fit for Mens Apparel. The Perſons who now keep the Shop deſigning to leave off the Trade, and the Houſe and Shop to be let at Michaelmas next.

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Juſt Publiſhed,

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